



Short Safety Subject

Short Safety Subjects are provided by the Public Safety Business Center, Fort Bragg, NC. Our intent is to provide safety topics for the purpose of increasing safety awareness and improving safety performance. Additional Short Safety Subjects are available on the PSBC Business Management Web Site at:

www.bragg.army.mil/psbc-bm/PubsAndForms/ShortSafetySubjects.htm

Snow Shoveling Safety



It's snow time again, but it's NO time to have a back injury. Many of us will need to shovel snow from our driveways and sidewalks this winter. With proper body mechanics, you can avoid a painful back injury.

The area most vulnerable to injury is the lower back. The muscles and bone joint structure of the lower back can come under tremendous strain during many activities, including snow shoveling.

When you shovel snow, remember to observe these pointers:

- Know your limits. Rest often. Over doing it can cause sore muscles, falls and heart attacks.
- Use a lightweight shovel. If you lift a five and one-quarter pound shovel 200 times to clear a walk, you've lifted 1050 pounds of shovel alone. With a two and three-fourth pound shovel, you've reduced that by 500 pounds.
- Use a long-handled shovel to avoid strenuous unnecessary body bending.
- Shoveling snow is a repetitive motion, which increases the risk for injury if the shoveler doesn't use proper lifting techniques. Don't bend over to scoop snow onto the shovel blade. Instead, grasp the shovel handle near the upper end while you load the shovel. This limits the time you spend in a stooped position.
- When the shovel is full, lift with your leg muscles and not your back. Bend your knees, keeping your back as straight as possible. With one hand near the end of the handle and the other as close as possible to the loaded blade, lift your load by straightening your legs.
- Walk the snow to the place you want it to be and dump it off the shovel. Do not throw the snow with a twisting or jerking motion. That may cause pain or injury to your back.
- Shovel at half the rate you're tempted to use. Invigorating cold air makes you want to shovel faster than you should. Most shoveler's tend to lift snow waist high. Scoop it only a foot or so off the ground and then throw it out of your way.
- Wax your shovel. Then wet snow won't cling to it.
- Don't drink while working (alcohol dulls sense of fatigue).
- Shovel snow when it's fresh. Every hour that snow stands it packs down and gets heavier. In a prolonged storm, it's best to shovel twice before the snow gets packed. Also, shovel before rainfalls. Rain-soaked snow can become incredibly heavy.

Remember, be careful this winter and take good care of your back. It's the only one you will ever have.